

## The Youth Football League Meeting Recap

**Date:** January 19, 2025 @ 6:00pm

**Location:** Embassy Suites by Hilton

**Purpose:** Bring youth football associations together to discuss plans for a unified league structure in 2025.

**Attendance:** 31 Youth Football Leaders representing 19 youth football associations: Andover, Anoka, Armstrong, Blaine, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Burnsville, Centennial, Coon Rapids, CDAA (Champlin Park), Fridley, Mpls. Phelps, Mounds View, Osseo, Rogers, Shakopee, St Paul Frogtown, Spring Lake Park

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### Welcome & Introductions

- Opening Remarks:
    - The meeting began with a welcome from Dawson Blanck thanking attendees for braving the cold to participate in the discussion.
    - Special acknowledgment was given to Embassy Suites by Hilton for their hospitality.
  - Introductions:
    - A roll call was conducted to recognize the individuals and associations represented, which included members from the former NMYFL and TCNFL, and leaders from the Big Norse Youth Football Conference (Burnsville, Bloomington, and Shakopee)
  - Special Guests from the Minnesota Youth Football Coaches Association:
    - Coach Dave Nelson (Blaine HS, Minnetonka HS, and now Holy Family) and Coach Mike Diggins (Centennial HS, MFCA Youth Liaison) were introduced.
    - Both guests emphasized the importance of collaboration between youth and HS football.
    - Promoted the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual MFCA Youth Coaches' Clinic on March 29<sup>th</sup>.
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### MYAS Overview: 35 Years of Service

- Who We Are:
    - Blanck shared background on MYAS and their mission to improve and enhance community-based programming and their 35-year track record of success.
  - Program Highlights:
    - Baseball: The Gopher State Baseball League (GSBL) supports over 900 teams annually through summer and fall leagues. Last year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> season.
    - Basketball: The MYAS Grade State Basketball Championships hosted 1,674 teams last year. 2025 marks the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Grade State.
    - Football Partnerships:
      - Since 2017, MYAS has partnered with several metro-area youth football leagues to provide different levels of management services and promote best practices (LMAA, South Metro 6, Big Norse Youth Football Conference, Southwest Youth Football League).
      - Recent collaboration includes the North Metro Youth Football League under Kevin Johnston's leadership.
  - Guiding Principle: MYAS operates where it's needed, ensuring their services positively impact youth sports across Minnesota.
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### Key Discussion Points

1. Why this meeting was called:
  - ✓ Background:
    1. A meeting on November 24<sup>th</sup>, led by Jesse Schwartz (Blaine Youth Football), initiated discussions on improving youth football offerings.
  - ✓ Goals:

1. Strengthen community-based youth football programs.
  2. Develop recommendations for a safe and engaging 2025 season.
  3. Create a new league for the associations, by the associations, facilitated by the *Managing Directors (Dawson Blanck/designated MYAS team members, Kevin Johnston, and John Swanson)*
- ✓ Meeting Objective:
1. Present recommendations for the new league format and governance.
    - All agenda items represent a unified recommendation developed through extensive collaboration and thoughtful dialogue during three meetings and exchanges with the Managing Directors over the past two months. This collaborative effort underscores our shared commitment to enhancing community-based youth football.
  2. Emphasize collaboration and transparency in implementing these changes.
  3. Disclaimer: Recommendations were presented, not mandates or rules.
2. Community-Based Sports:
- MYAS has established eligibility criteria, team composition standards, and guidelines to protect community-based sports, in partnership with parent-volunteer youth athletic associations.
    1. Track record exists in youth basketball and baseball.
  - ✓ Similar oversight structures in youth hockey, soccer, and lacrosse to name a few, were highlighted as models for youth football.
3. League Structure & Governance:
- John Swanson provided an overview from a historical perspective and went into detail on the proposed league format focusing on the duties and responsibilities of the Managing Directors. He also provided an understanding of what would be included in the comprehensive league entry fees highlighting areas of focus for Dawson Blanck/designated MYAS team members (Grades 2-8 comprehensive league management services. Kevin Johnston (Grades 2-6 Scheduling/Management and Grades 2-8 Supervisor of Officials), and John Swanson (Grades 7-8 Scheduling and Support). Swanson also underscored the importance of this league being governed by the associations. Each participating association will designate 1 board member to serve on the League Advisory Board. This board will oversee and govern the league and will be facilitated by the Managing Directors.
4. Association Guidelines:
- Blanck discussed the proposed “Best Practices” or Standards that associations would agree on before entering teams.
  - Presented the proposed team composition and player eligibility guidelines, as well as the team management practices ensuring consistency and fairness across participating organizations.
    1. This league is community-based and will not accept open/all-star & independent teams.
      - **RegisterPlay** would be the preferred platform to house each association’s portal, league contacts, team creation and coach assignment, roster submission, schedules, standings, and all league information. MYAS has utilized this platform in youth baseball and basketball over the past three years. The support and service would be provided by MYAS staff.
      - Minimum training, screening, and education requirements would be required for the Head Coach and Lead Assistant through USA Football or Trusted Coaches. It was noted that if associations use Trusted

Coaches, MYAS staff would be activated to track and manage the completion dates of coaches.

- League Coaches Meeting would be held the 1<sup>st</sup> week of August.
- Youth Football Coaches Clinic will be held the last week of July.

5. Youth Football Tackle League Details:

✓ Kevin Johnston outlined the following:

1. Proposed grade levels for participation will be 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>.
2. League Entry Fees would cover all official's and assignors' game fees. The MYAS Bookkeeping service would send out game fee payments regularly to assignors, once verified by the Supervisor of Officials.
3. Game officials' and assignors' roles and responsibilities under Johnston's leadership as the Supervisor of Officials
4. Verification of Officials using Trusted Officials registered, MSHSL certification, or through the League Verified Status (Assignors/community leaders that provide their training, screening, and education for their pool of officials)
5. Consistency in Game Fees
6. Proposed Regular Season/Bowl Games Timeline (August 25-October 12)
  - Grades 2-4= 8 league games
  - Grades 5-8= 9 league games
  - Includes a League Kickoff Weekend on September 6 at the National Sports Center in Blaine.

Additional League Opportunity (1-3 more games)

- October 21-November 2
7. Next steps for associations to align with the proposed league structure. Managing Directors are asking that associations commit to this league by February 28.

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### Key Takeaways

- The focus of the new league is to create a safe, positive, and productive experience for each role of the youth football experience (coach, player, parent/fan, official, association leaders).
- Collaboration is key—Managing Directors will serve as a facilitator, with decisions driven by participating associations.
- Clear guidelines and a unified structure will protect the integrity of community-based youth football.
- Associations were encouraged to provide feedback on the presented recommendations.

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### Next Steps

1. Feedback Collection: Associations are encouraged to review the recommendations, and reach out to Dawson, Kevin, or John with any questions.
  - **Requested Association Commitment= February 28<sup>th</sup>**
2. Implementation Plan: Managing Directors will initiate the League Advisory Board in early March to collaborate with committed associations on the league structure, rules, and governance framework.
3. Ongoing Communication: Regular updates and meetings will ensure all youth football leaders are aligned moving forward.

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### Closing Remarks

- Attendees were thanked for their time, input, and commitment to enhancing youth football.
- Everyone was encouraged to work together to make 2025 a groundbreaking year for youth football in Minnesota.